

monthly newsletter from amnesty international postcards for prisoners campaign

December 1968

Here is some news of former prisoners:

Nina Karsow, Poland (December 1967) Prisoner of the Year who was released in September this year, arrived in Vienna from Poland on November 15th. On December 7th and lit the Amnesty Candle at the second Human Rights Day Lecture the following day. The 'Times' (December 9th) published a letter in which Miss Karsow thanked all who interceded on her behalf while she was in prison, action which, in her view, brought about her release. She especially appreciated having been chosen as a Prisoner of the Year by the Amnesty International Assembly in Stockholm last August. Miss Karsow and her husband, Dr Szechter, were allowed to leave Poland on condition that they give up Polish citizenship, as at least 2,000 Polish Jews have done during the past year. Stateless now, they are hoping to be accepted by a West European country.

Caroline Okello Odongo, Kenya (January 1967). Members will be delighted to hear that Mrs Caroline Okello Odongo was released on December 2nd after spending over two years in preventive detention.

Jean Coulardeau, France (June 1968). It has been confirmed that Jean Coulardeau, the Conscientious Objector who was sentenced to 1 year's imprisonment in April, is now free. He has made good use of his freedom by passing the exams for which he had been studying and by getting married. At present he is living in Bordeaux, but is still unemployed and is considering emigrating to Canada.

Mohamed Harbi, Algeria (October 1965) was released early in November, but is still under house arrest and not completely free.

Mohamed Shamte, Tanzania (January 1966). Three of the Cabinet Ministers who were detained with Mr Shamte were released on November 22nd. It is hoped that the release of the others will follow soon.

Essone N'Dong, Gabon (April 1968) was sentenced to 4 months' imprisonment in November - after being held without trial for almost a year.

Abu Mayanja (and Rajat Neogy), Uganda (November 1968) have been charged with publishing seditious material. Both men have been remanded for trial until January 9th 1969. At the preliminary hearing bail was granted in the face of police objection, but despite this, the two men were re-detained as they left the court. We ask members to do all they can to publicise this case which involves the very important principle of freedom of the press.

Horst and Sabine Bonnet, East Germany (October 1968). We have received more information about Horst Bonnet and his wife. He is 37, entered drama school in 1949 and began working with Berthold Brecht at the Berliner Ensemble in 1951. Since then he has been responsible for a wide variety of theatre and opera productions in East Germany. Sabine Bonnet, who is 35, is a gynaecologist. It is hoped to organise a campaign for their release involving prominent people in the theatre world. Horst Bonnet is in Rummenlsburg Prison, 1134 Berlin, Post-schiessfach 11, German Democratic Republic. It is not known where his wife is

held. They have one child, a boy aged thirteen.

István Tabódy, Hungary (May 1968). According to a recent report from Hungary, an appeal for amnesty, organised in 1967 by friends and fellow priests through the Hungarian lawyers' association, was rejected earlier this year.

Here are this month's prisoners:

Anthony Grey, China.

Anthony Grey is the Peking Correspondent of Reuters News Agency. On 21st July 1967, at the Height of the Cultural Revolution, Mr Grey was placed under detention in one small room of his house in Peking. He has remained there for the last seventeen months, forbidden to see visitors, speak on the telephone, leave or even move about the house, under permanent guard and with stringent restrictions on his reading matter.

Mr Grey's detention, without any form of charge or trial, appears to have been in the nature of a quid pro quo by the Chinese Government after a number of pro-Peking demonstrators had been arrested by the Hong Kong authorities following disturbances there in the early summer of 1967. In particular, Grey's arrest seems to be a reprisal for the trial and sentencing of two Chinese journalists, correspondents of the New China News Agency, who took part in the demonstrations; one was released in November, but the sentence of the second expires only in September 1969. Mr Grey had no connection whatever with the events in Hong Kong, nor has there been any suggestion by the Chinese that he has ever broken Chinese law. The Chinese Government maintains that Hong Kong is properly part of the Chinese mainland, and that it should be returned to China by the Hong Kong Government which is, in effect, occupying, rather than legitimately administering the territory.

Mr Grey is a British national. Constant representations for his release have been made by the British Government, as well as by Reuters. The British Mission in Peking is denied regular consular access to him, but members have made two visits in the last six months. Up to now his health seems relatively good, but he is suffering from the strain of prolonged isolation and complains of chest pains for which he has not yet had an adequate medical examination.

Members should send cards to:

Chou en Lai,
Prime Minister,
Peking,
People's Republic of China.

OR to Anthony Grey himself at:
15 Nan Chintze,
Peking,
People's Republic of China.

Or to any pro-China political movement in your own country.

Ndabaningi Sithole, Rhodesia.

The Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, one of the most eminent African nationalist leaders in Rhodesia, has been in restriction or detention since 1963. He is held under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, perhaps the most notorious piece of legislation on the Rhodesian Statute Book. Sir Robert Tredgold, then Chief Justice, resigned in protest when it was passed. (A full account of the provisions of the law appears in Amnesty's report on 'Prison Conditions in Rhodesia' 4/-.)

The son of a builder, Ndabaningi Sithole was born in 1920. On leaving school he became a teacher, took a degree by correspondence and continued to develop his interest in politics. From 1955 to 1958 he was at Newton Theological College, Andover, near Boston in the U.S.A. During this time he wrote 'African Nationalism', an account of the growing revolt of Africans against white

rule in Central Africa. (A revised edition has just been published by O.U.P.)

On returning to Rhodesia, Mr Sithole was ordained as a Congregational Minister. He became Principal of Chikore Central Primary School and in 1959 was elected President of the African Teachers Association, a position he resigned a year later to take office in the National Democratic Party - the main African Nationalist party led by Joshua Nkomo. In 1960 he represented the NDP at a conference in London to review the position of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. During the troubled years leading to the break-up of the Federation, the NDP was banned, re-appeared as the Zimbabwe African People's Union(ZAPU), was again banned in Sept. 1962 and then operated as an underground movement and outside the country. In mid-1963 a new African party, the Zimbabwe African National Union(ZANU) was formed and ZAPU reconstituted itself as the People's Caretaker Council(PCC). Sithole was elected President of ZANU, although he was in prison at the time having been arrested on charges of circulating subversive statements - this was in connection with a letter sent to African voters calling on them to boycott elections held at the end of 1962 because the franchise qualifications discriminated heavily against Africans. He has been in restriction or detention ever since.

On Nov.7th 1968 Mr Sithole, together with two other ZANU leaders, were taken from H.M. Remand Prison in Salisbury to meet Mr George Thomson, Br. Minister with Responsibility for Rhodesia, and Mr Maurice Foley. On the same day Mr Thomson met Mr Nkomo and ZAPU leaders. With both groups he discussed the Fearless Proposals for a settlement of the Rhodesia question. On November 20th five white policemen searched Mr Sithole's cell and took away certain documents. Mr Sithole, together with another ZANU leader, were then taken to an unknown place where they are being held incommunicado and denied access to legal advisers. It is thought that they may be at Goromonzi cells about 20 miles from Salisbury, a place provided with 'dark cells' used for punishment where 'hard' political cases are often kept. There is speculation that the Rhodesian Government may be intending to charge Mr Sithole, but we have not been able to establish whether this is so or not.

Mr Sithole is married and has 5 children between the ages of 21 and 11. The four eldest children are abroad, two in the U.S. and two in Sweden. The youngest is with her mother who runs the Sithole's small farm. Mr Sithole suffers from high blood pressure and should have regular medical check-ups. He is also subject to epileptic fits.

Mr Joshua Nkomo, President of ZAPU, had been serving a 5 year restriction term at Gonakudzingwa. When this expired in November, he was re-restricted for another 5 years.

When sending cards to the Rhodesian authorities you could express your concern at Mr Sithole's continued detention under a law that has been so widely criticised and ask that if there is a charge against him he be brought to trial without delay. Since the British Government assumed responsibility for Rhodesia by an Act of Parliament in 1965, you could also write to the British Residual Mission in Salisbury, asking for information. Or you could send cards to either the prisoner or his wife.

Addresses to which you could send cards:

The Minister for Justice, Law and Order,
Mr Desmond Lardner-Burke,
Government of Rhodesia,
Salisbury.

Mr Peter Carter,
Br. High Commission Residual Staff,
R.T.A. House, Baker Avenue,
P.O. Box 1482, Salisbury.

The Rev. Ndabaringi Sithole,
c/o Director of Prisons,
P.O.B. 8151, Causeway, Salisbury.

Mrs Canaan Sithole,
Freedom Farm,
P.O. Mount Selinda, via Chipinga.

Mr Jusu Sheriff, Sierra Leone.

Jusu Sheriff is the leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party which was ousted when the army seized power in March 1967. In April 1968 a second military coup, led by warrant officers, restored civilian government and re-instated as Prime Minister Siaka Stevens, leader of the A.P.C., the party which had won the elections in 1967. The intention was to create a national government including representatives of both parties. However, virtually all SLPP members of the legislature have been deprived of their seats following election petitions alleging 'rigging'. Bye-elections are now in progress. There is only one SLPP Minister in the Cabinet, a nonentity, and the country is effectively under APC control.

During October and November 1968 there were serious disturbances throughout the country and a State of Emergency was declared. Jusu Sheriff was one of 160 people arrested in Freetown during the last week of November and the first week of December. Among those arrested are editors of SLPP newspapers which have been shut down. Many more arrests have been reported up country. The arrests appear to have been mainly of SLPP members and members of the Mende tribe, which was associated with the former government. Violence has broken out in old SLPP constituencies, as well as in the capital. Several deaths have been reported and the army has been called in.

Jusu Sheriff, who is in his early forties, is an accountant by profession and only recently took over the leadership of the SLPP. He has a reputation for integrity and moderation and is respected by both parties. He is married. His wife is a Creole; he himself is a Mende. The SLPP was formerly led by Sir Albert Margai, who is now in exile.

Very little reliable information is available on recent developments in Sierra Leone and it is difficult to judge the situation. When writing to the Sierra Leone authorities you should ask that Mr Sheriff be brought to trial immediately, or released.

Send your cards to:

EITHER

The Right Hon. Siaka Stevens,
Office of the Prime Minister,
Freetown,
Sierra Leone.

OR

Mr Jusu Sheriff
c/o The Director of Prisons,
Pademba Road Prison,
Freetown.

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